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ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM

Dwight Smith Earns MMR 329

In 1930, five-year-old Dwight Smith received his first electric train. It was an entry-level Lionel O-Gauge set with an oval of track, an electric locomotive and three passenger cars. The set was given to Dwight by a neighbor who had three daughters, but no sons. By giving the train to Dwight the neighbor realized his desire to enjoy an electric train set, which would not have been well received in his household of daughters.

By 1939, Dwight's Lionel layout had reached its zenith, with the addition of a steam locomotive, freight cars, track switches, some structures, figures, and scenic details. All were mounted on a four-by-eight sheet of wallboard.

In 1940, Dwight began railfanning. The daily passage of four mixed trains in plain view from the family's summer home in Vermont led to forays to the village depot at train time, as well as train watching and photographing trains at various rail facilities within a 25-mile radius of home. By then he had learned that HO-scale model railroads were much more realistic than his Lionel empire. Soon the Lionel equipment was sold and the money earned went to acquiring HO-scale rolling stock. His first car was a Megow kit for a 40' box car. The basic body was wood with printed cardboard sides and stamped brass ends and doors. Rivets on the car sides were dots of thick paint. The kit included a piece of bamboo, which was sliced into thin strips and used for roof ribs. A dress snap served as a brake wheel.

Around 1941, the most serious expenditure on the growing HO railroad was a Mantua mogul mechanism kit (frame, wheels, cylinder casting, and six-volt motor). Dwight couldn't afford the complete locomotive kit, so he scratch built the balance of the mogul and a tender from balsa wood, card stock and paper overlays and purchased a set of fox trucks for the tender. He then constructed some benchwork from used lumber and a piece of wallboard, laid some track and powered the layout with a six-volt dry cell battery. Now that he had his first operating HO layout, he decided to give it a name. He chose "Northern Vermont RR" and sent off an application to register the name with *The Model Railroader* pike registry. Dwight still has the official certificate dated Dec. 3, 1941 and signed by A.C. Kalmbach.

Somewhere between 1942 and 1948, the early layout was retired and except for occasional construction of a car kit, little was accomplished. After more than three years in the Navy, including combat in the South Pacific while serving on the battleship South Dakota, Dwight returned to civilian life. He graduated from college in February,1947. A few days later, he began work at the Boston & Maine Railroad in the freight traffic department, where he worked until 1972.

Between 1948 and 1951 Dwight started construction of his first permanent layout. Fate intervened and a job transfer to Concord, NH, halted all work on the layout.

At Dwight's newly acquired old farm house in New Hampshire, construction was finally completed on a fully operational layout. Acquisitions of rolling stock, structures and trackage moved forward at a steady pace. Many skills were developed in scratch-building and kit bashing.

Another promotion moved Dwight to a small town in New Hampshire on the banks of the Connecticut River in 1956. His new job entailed management of a six mile long, 12" to the foot railroad. But the little HO Northern Vermont Railway still held his interest, and it was reconstructed in a basement play room.

In 1960, Dwight and family made another move, this time to Portland, Maine. Most of the Northern Vermont RR made the trip, this time to the basement of the Smith family residence. Dwight acquired his first brass locomotive then, as well as his first full-size (120 ton) steam locomotive. Other firsts were his first use of code 70 rail, first comprehensive scenery construction and regular attendance at the Sunday evening operating sessions at a friend's large HO and HOn3 layout.

From 1973 to 1990, the HO Northern Vermont RR was dismantled and placed in storage while Dwight pursued his interest in full-size railroading. Another family move was made, this time to North Conway, NH. It was here that Dwight and friends built up a very successful and busy tourist railroad operation, his second experience with a six mile long 12" to the foot railroad. This venture kept Dwight so busy that he had no time or desire to pursue his hobby of model railroading.

At the end of 1990, Dwight and his wife both retired from full-size, full-time railroading. With new leisure time available, Dwight unboxed the remnants of previous layouts and started constructions of an all-new Northern Vermont RR. His fully operational and scenicked model railroad now occupies a sunny upstairs bedroom. It was during these past 14 years that Dwight decided to put his knowledge to work and entered the NMRA Achievement Program. He marvels at the strides the hobby has made since he resumed model railroading in 1990. Resin and injection molded car kits, brass and plastic/metal steam locomotives, styrene building materials, realistic scenic materials and many other items now make it easier for the modeler to achieve the desired results for his efforts.

Dwight holds Certificates of Achievement in Cars, Structures, Scenery, Electrical Engineer, Chief Dispatcher, Volunteer, and Model Railroad Author.